2: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Wicklow

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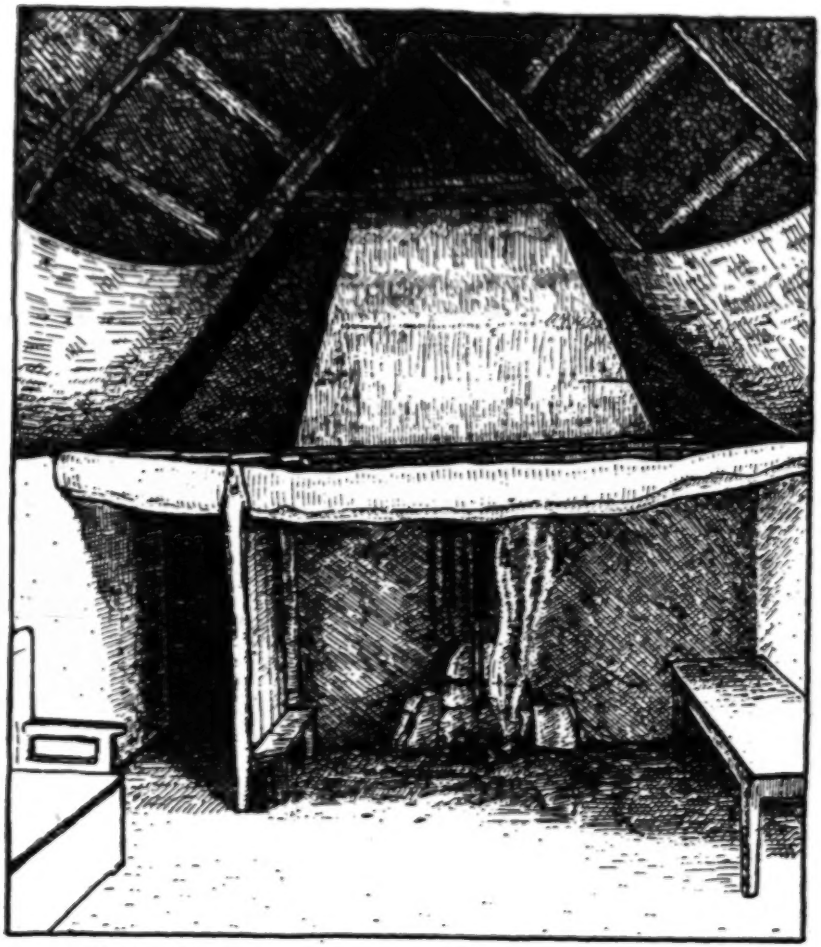

Fig. 6. Wooden side-wall of the fireplace. The kitchen corner. Kyle, Ballinglen, Co. Wicklow.

the "shelter door" into consideration, the whole kitchen being of importance with regard to the fire.

The basket chimney, *sineán*, is plastered with clay inside and outside to resist sparks from the fire. A plaster mixture of clay and calfmanure is said to be very useful. The older chimneys were straight i. e. on looking up from the fireplace the sky was visible above. In later ones the flue, *poll an deataigh*,

[237]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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262 make a long list of the plants and herbs which are gathered and dried for use as simples. In some areas, for example Tyrone and Derry, it is recorded that the cattle used to be
237 bled in summer, " in a smooth place, each layer of coagulating
262 blood being strewn with salt until a little mound was formed, which was cut up in squares and laid by for use as food in the scarce time of the year." In Wicklow (1780) " they bleed their horses and cows, and mix the blood with meal for food."
273 In the days before sugar was known honey played a considerable part in domestic economy and mead or metheglin, made from honey, was once a popular beverage. We have no knowledge of the period when whiskey distillation was first practised but stills and worms of some antiquity have been found in the bogs, and it is natural to correlate the popularity of whiskey and poteen with the dampness of the climate. A fact worth recording is that until recently illicit stills were made and kept in repair by travelling tinkers in whom it is perhaps not extravagant to see shades of the skilled craftsmen of the later Bronze Age who made cauldrons out of sheet bronze (*cf.* Fig. 5).

252 Far into the historic period heated stones were employed in cooking and it may be that memories of this old method linger on. The nearest thing I have seen is the custom of plunging a hot poker into cow's milk to " singe it " when it is given to lambs. The explanation offered was that this made its taste resemble that of sheep's milk.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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Lough Neagh—incidentally one of the oldest occupied areas in the country—the valley of the Suir and the Aran Islands. I illustrate a boat-shaped yarn-holder (Fig. 73) and also two types of "calf basket" (Fig. 74), which are tied over the calf's muzzle to prevent it from taking the cow's milk. (In north Antrim, as in Wales, I have seen instead a leather strap armed with nails which is fastened on in such a way that the nails prick the cow's udder). The calf basket recalls the Roman *corbis constricta* which prevented the plough oxen from cropping the vine shoots. In fine work the basket maker uses split rods which he prepares with a "cleaver." The example illustrated (Fig. 75) is made of cow's horn.

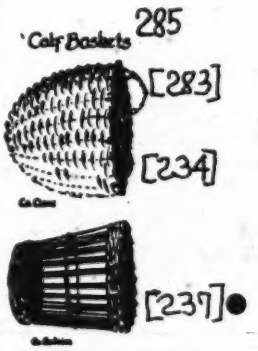

Fig. 74.

Fig. 75.

Then there are the shallow fish baskets, resembling the potato-dish shown in Fig. 31, which the Galway fisherwomen carry on their heads. In Limerick oval trays or "floats" are used for hawking shell-fish or fruit: they are of various sizes from 1 to 2 feet in length. Potato baskets (Fig. 54) and shallow baskets used in connection with wool-dyeing must be mentioned, and I illustrate two kinds of linebasket (Fig. 76) which, like the lobster pots (Fig. 104) are made by the fishermen. The tall apple-baskets used for picking fruit in the Armagh orchards taper down to a narrow base. On the other hand the deep carrying-baskets of the Aran Islands are shaped

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[184]
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9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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CHAPTER XV.

THE BOG.

314 I have called this chapter " the Bog " rather than " Turf " because fuel is not the only product of the Irish turf bogs. The rough grazings once so important in mountain economy (Chapter 6) are commonly located on thin peat, while " buried treasure " is obtained in the form of bog-timber and also, it may be, in objects of wood or metal lost or deposited in the turf in ancient times. Measured by the time and labour of cutting, footing, stacking, and carrying, turf is an expensive fuel. At best, work in the bogs involves a constant struggle against water-logging underfoot and mists and rain overhead: at the worst there comes an occasional season wetter than usual when little or no turf can be won, and the bare countryside must be searched for sticks and rotting timber to burn. [237] In these circumstances dried cowdung is often used as fuel. [372] Moreover, the heavy drain upon all available hands comes in early summer, and the growing crops and livestock are liable to be neglected. " A great impediment to good husbandry," is the verdict of one writer.

The turf is cut in a normal year from the beginning of May onwards, or as soon as the potatoes and corn are in the ground, but the great thing is to begin as early as possible in [132] order to profit from the dry weather of spring. In districts where few crops are grown April, the driest month of the year, is the chosen time. A current of excitement runs through

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

in many different ways, for instance around Ballymoney it is hooked and the slanesman uses it to pull the turf-barrow into position. A foot-rest is provided on the foot-slane, on the side opposite the wing. There are left and right-footed workers, but it is not always necessary to use the foot, the strength of the arm sufficing. As with some of the loys (Chapter 13), there is a type of slane in the Midlands which has a separate spade-tree to which the handle is attached by two iron bands (Fig. 88). The spade-tree is of light wood, elm, or larch. Lightness is an essential quality in the slane: the blade is thin and sharp and weighs about 1¼ pounds. The old type of

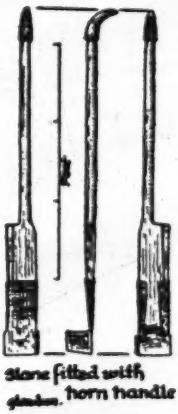

Fig. 87.

slane, like the loy, is straight handled, but it is customary to affix a cow's horn as hand-grip (Fig. 87.) Another type of handle is shown in Fig. 86.

Where the bogs are soft, especially in the area from Galway to Meath, a broad flat breast spade is employed in place of the winged slane. Its blade measures some 13 inches by 5 and it is sharpened at the sides as well as the mouth (Fig. 88). A Co. Derry variety has the edge expanded to 5¾ inches: its blade is slightly dished and has a gentle rounded lift. Details of this kind assist in the penetration and with-

Fig. 88.

[237]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEASHORE.

The seashore, where the first Irishmen picked up a living some thousands of years ago, still plays a significant role in the islands and around the coasts and is laid under contribution for seaweed and drift weed (wrack), for sand and gravel, and for accessory supplies of food. On many an Irish strand too, seasonal festivals, horse-racing and country games have only slowly given way to holiday makers from the city. Communal rights in the seashore were jealously guarded, and one constantly comes across ancient customs that have survived in this most changeless of environments. I recall the countryman " on the brew " (bureau ; that is, on the dole) whom I watched in County Down twisting on his bare thigh, his palm dried with a dusting of wood-ash from the hearth, the two-ply " crop " of horse-hair for his fishing line—each ply consisting of twenty-one strands taken from the tail of a white mare. This method of twisting is found amongst almost all primitive peoples, and can be paralleled, for instance, from the remote Andaman Islands. His outfit for codling fishing is illustrated in Fig. 94, which shows two hair crops attached to a home-made sinker of lead—called from its shape a " frog " ; the use of horse-hair has survived in this case because it is stiffer than gut and serves to keep the hooks from fouling each other. Rock-fishing lines in Co. Antrim are sometimes made of black horse-hair, but for the part next the hook, called the foot-line, white hair is used. Well-made lines of carefully selected hair

22 [283] 227 226 [237]

[TEXT CONTINUES TOP OF P. 144—ANALYST]

[p. 143]

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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241 [423] [417] sometimes raises cases of trespass. The fences are the usual dry stone walls of the west, and the fields seldom have gates.

The crops most grown are barley, oats, potatoes, and a little rye, and a few turnips. The manures are sea-weed and farm-yard manure, and occasionally old thatch, saturated with peat smoke, and well rotted with age. The agricultural implements employed are the spade and shovel, and the sickle; the use of plough or harrow is not known. Low-lying, damp places are utilized for the growth of osiers for panniers, baskets, and lobster-pots.

As is the case in many fishing communities, the fields are not well kept, and have a rather untended appearance, the weeds being let grow rankly in the potato fields, the reason given for which is that without the shelter given by the weeds the crop would be speedily destroyed by the winds; but the most probable explanation is that the amount of attention directed towards the fishing at the most critical periods of the year causes the less important occupation to be to some extent neglected. A family keeps a couple of pigs, some [231] sheep, a cow or two, geese (of which large flocks are kept on the islands), ducks and fowl, but no turkeys.

735 Some sixty families are said to be in very poor circumstances, and of these forty-six have no cattle.

231 The animals are to a large extent supported on the very extensive commonage.

The pigs, cattle, and fowl are taken into the houses at night, while the sheep, geese, and ponies get shelter how they can. The pigs are not regularly fed, but have, as the people express it, "the run of their teeth" of the island, and by feeding on such provision as they can pick up on the sea-shore, the flesh is often rendered rank and fishy-flavoured.

372 Fuel is supplied either by peat cut from the bogs, or, in a large proportion of cases, by "scraws" of the thin peaty layer which covers the rocky surface of the higher and wilder parts of the islands, cut into blocks the size of peats, and dried in the sun. The substance thus obtained can be burned, and will throw out considerable heat, but is extremely dirty and wasteful, as it contains a large proportion of earth and small pebbles, which are left in the ash. From repeated cuttings of these "scraws" the surface of the higher ground has become much deteriorated in value, and this is especially the case on [237] Inishshark, where there are no bogs. In times of scarcity fish-bones and cow-mats (*bois de vâche*) are used as fuel.

373 For light, petroleum lamps and candles are now generally used,

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

evidence that periodic re-allotment had been a general practice. It continued well into last century in some parts of the country, for example Antrim, Cork, Kerry, Mayo, Galway and Kilkenny. The casting of lots, annually[1] or triennially[2] was the occasion for much display of feeling, and was regulated by a headman or 'king' who also made arrangements for the summer pasturing.[3] In Kilkenny[4] the lots were cast by means of marked stones wrapped in clay. The ritual was prolonged. 'They sometimes play at it to try their luck before they will cast lots in good earnest. Even then they must sometimes make a new division if too many are dissatisfied.'[5]

To understand the openfield system in full working order we should see it in its total geographical setting, the booley with the bally. Here in the hilly fringes of Europe, towards the ocean, even moderately fertile land is limited in extent: soils derived from barren rocks and heavily leached by excessive rains are subject to waterlogging, acidity and the accumulation of peat. Spring is the only season without excessive rain, and ploughing or digging in autumn or winter even if possible is unprofitable. Winter wheat is a risky crop in most parts, and the emphasis is on spring corn, especially oats. This meant that the arable land was free of crops from October to April, and it allowed pasturing and manuring by livestock for rather more than half the year. So deep-rooted is this communal pasturing that there are districts in Donegal where to this day the livestock of the whole townland has the run of all the farms through the winter. And elsewhere, as I know to my cost, having tried for many years to cultivate a garden in the Mountains of Mourne, one's neighbours have a lingering habit of ignoring the fences at that season, when food for livestock is scarce.

Manuring and treading of the infield by cattle and sheep were supplemented in spring by quantities of manure taken from the cabins, 'some houses having . . . from ten to fifteen

[1]Antrim: Ordnance Survey Memoirs, Rathlin Island (1830); Cork and Kerry: Lord Dufferin, *Irish Emigration* (1867), 340.
[2]P. Knight, *Erris in the Irish Highlands* (1836), 47.
[3]ibid. For Norwegian parallels see *The Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 4 (1956), 17–81, 77.
[4]W. Tighe, *Statistical Observations, County of Kilkenny* (1802), 419.
[5]Sir Henry Piers, *West-Meath*, 117.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

tons weight of dung, and only cleaned out once a year!'[1] Sea wrack and shell sand were carted up to thirty miles inland from the coast.[2] In the absence of permanent fences the majority of the cattle must be moved away during the summer and those remaining carefully herded or tethered on the outfield, or put in temporary enclosures to manure that part of the outfield which was due for cultivation.[3] In its origins and full development the rundale system depended on the movement of most of the livestock to summer booleys situated some distance away. Here the widely distributed uplands and boglands played their part in the traditional economy. Although late survivals of the booleying system are hard to find, little of it managing to outlive the crisis of the Great Famine, we are beginning to track down its history and significance. The Irish texts are as disappointing and vague as they are in many matters touching the common people, but folk-memory comes to our aid. There are stories, and place-name evidence, from most parts of the country, and regional variants of the practice are being studied and mapped.[4]

We give first some quotations from the few discerning observers who drew attention to the practice. Edmund Spenser's enlightened spirit of inquiry is shown in his remark: 'Have you ever heard what was the occasion and first beginning of this custom? for it is good to know the same.' He writes, in 1595, 'There is one use amongst them, to keep their cattle and to live themselves the most part of the year in boolies, pasturing upon the mountain and waste wild places.'[5] His objections to the system, however, reveal his Englishry: the booleys hid outlaws and loose people, and the wandering life made the Irish barbarous. The following brief reference comes from O'Flaherty's famous account of West Connacht: 'In summertime they drive their cattle to the mountains, where such as look to the cattle live in small cabins for that season.'[6] In the eighteenth

[1] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 17.
[2] E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country* (1951), 141.
[3] W. Harris, *The Ancient and Present State of the County of Down* (1744), 131.
[4] J. M. Graham, 'Transhumance in Ireland', in *The Advancement of Science*, 37 (1953), 74–9.
[5] Quoted in H. Morley, *Ireland Under Elizabeth and James I* (1890), 67.
[6] R. O'Flaherty, *H'Iar Connaught* (1684), 17.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

the door'. A wattle frame, a handful of straw or a dried sheep-skin served as a substitute for glass, and it is remembered in Co. Fermanagh that a mare's cleanings (the placenta) best served the purpose. My informant added significantly: 'No bayonet would go through it'! In one Donegal parish in 1837, according to a petition sent by the school teacher to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, there was 'not more than ten square feet of glass in windows in the whole (some 1,500 houses) with the exception of the chapel, the school house, the priest's house, Mr. Dombrain's house and the constabulary barrack'.[1]

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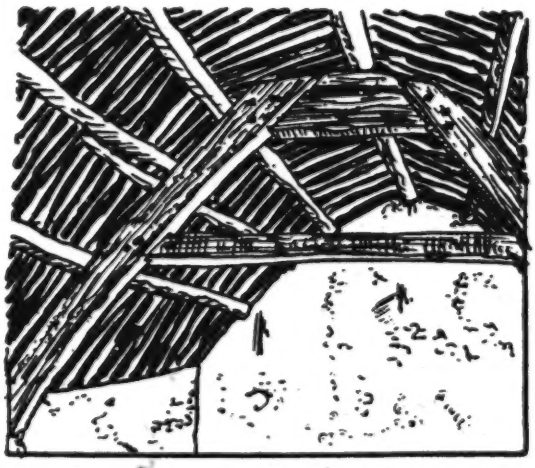

FIG. 10. A coupled roof of bog-oak, Co. Donegal, the ridge rounded against the wind (compare Fig. 12, 3).

Details of the roof-frame of the long house show many minor variations from place to place, but as a general rule it is composed of coupled rafters traditionally of bog-oak chosen for its strength as well as from the scarcity of live oak trees (Fig. 10). A house is measured, not in feet, but by the number of bays it contains, a bay being the distance between the couples, which is standard in any one district. There is some evidence that the

[1]Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 16.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

laths and wattles (willow, hazel or briar), plastered with a mixture of clay and cowdung or ashes and coated with limewash. In parts of the south hay or straw ropes soaked in mud (putogs) were used, twisted between a frame of horizontal rungs and plastered over with mud or limewash. In Co. Armagh one occasionally sees a heron's wing hung on the brace: it is used for dusting the hearth. The jamb-walls—and internal walls in general—were traditionally constructed of wattle and daub, or of mud or wood. The wattle and daub construction is undoubtedly an old technique which, in the days of plentiful timber, was much more generally used in house-building. Internal partitions carried up to the roof, however, probably followed the adoption of the chimney flue, and if so this innovation must be reckoned as a contribution to privacy as well as to comfort. We note in passing that wattlework found its last traditional use in house construction in the wicker doors of the west, and in the windbreaks of the north, bundles of hazel or birch branches (wassocks) set up on the windward side of the door. The stone-built external porch must be regarded as a relatively novel addition to the traditional house style.

Wooden or stone seats are often built in near the hearth, and the wall behind the fire, protected by a flagstone or a built-up hob, usually has a keeping hole on each side of the fire (Fig. 19). Known as boles in Antrim and coves in Cavan, these may be elaborated in Achill Island, for example, into two- or three-tier wall-dressers whose ancestry lies in the stone house tradition of the mountain country. There is an old belief that the left-hand keeping hole belongs to the woman and the right-hand one to the man of the house. Here you may see in safe keeping, on one side the woman's knitting, on the other the man's clay pipe. Stone dressers were a characteristic feature of the huts at Skara Brae,[1] where also Professor Childe found evidence that the women occupied the left side of the fire and the men the right. In the Hebridean black-houses the left-hand side of the fire was the woman's quarter.[2] Similarly in the old turf houses of the Highlands, 'the women were invariably ranged around the central fire on one side, the men on the

[1] V. G. Childe, *Skara Brae*, 15.
[2] A. Mitchell, *The Past in the Present*, 52.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

VIII

FARMYARDS AND FENCES

351 THE paved area in front of the traditional Irish farmhouse is known as 'the street', a word here used in its original sense of a pavement. The old style street is usually cobbled, and occasionally, especially along the coast where the materials lay to hand, neat arrangements of waterworn pebbles made a pretty pattern at the door. This is a technique of prehistoric origin which is found along the Atlantic coasts and in the Mediterranean region. The area around the hearth also may be pebbled, but I have not seen in Ireland the entire kitchen floor so treated, as in parts of Wales. There may be a stone bench against the front of the house near the door, and here, or in specially constructed wall coves across the cobbled street, pots and buckets are put out to dry (Fig. 32).

● 237 351 Immediately in front of the house is the traditional location of the dungheap. 'The dunghill before each door' was commented on by nearly every nineteenth-century traveller. The apologists, it is true, remind us that tenants would not move the dunghill for fear of having their rents raised because of 'improvements'. But its proximity to the dwelling house need occasion no surprise when we recall that down to a century or two ago, in remote parts, the dung was allowed to accumulate at the end of the living-room. We recall that in 1837 a school teacher wrote that some houses in Donegal had 'within their walls from ten to fifteen tons weight of dung, and only cleaned out once a year'.[1] Nowadays, however, from hygienic motives, the manure is removed to a less conspicuous part of the farmyard, though if possible still in sight of the door, for the farmer likes

[1]Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 17.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

to keep an eye on his wealth. The muck-heap is the source of good crops and good luck, a potent symbol of well-being: 'where there is muck there is luck'. It was the custom, recorded for instance in the Glens of Antrim, to stick a sprig of rowan tree upright in the midden on May Eve to protect the farm from mischievous fairies. The muck symbolizes the fertility of the farm.

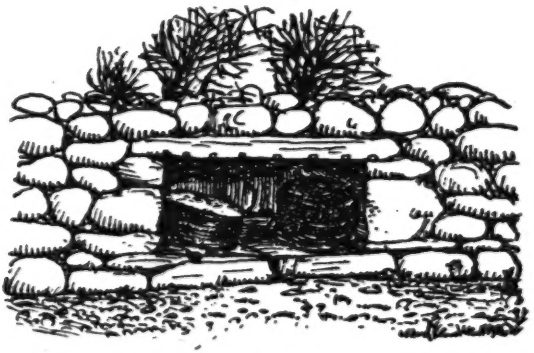

FIG. 32. Keeping-hole for pots, Co. Down.

In many parts of the country, especially in the northern counties and in Co. Wexford, the entrance to the farmyard is dignified by a pair of massive stone gate piers, generally built-up from field-stones in the form of a conical topped cylinder and kept whitewashed. There are many modern variants in concrete, and the old style piers are steadily disappearing and are often hastened to their end by carelessly driven tractors or lorries. They seem far too massive for the gates they carry, resembling twin bastions defending the entrance to a fortified enclosure (Figs. 5, 33). In some areas, probably under the influence of improving landlords or land agents, field entrances are also dignified by built-up stone piers, and it is possible to explain the fashion as part of the agrarian revolution which resulted in enclosure. In the virtual absence of well-grown oak trees they provided an Irish alternative to the oak gate-post of the English farm, sturdy enough to carry the iron gate which for the same reason took the place of the five-barred oaken gate.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

time: his finger marks can still be seen when the dried turves are burning in the fire. In deep bogs the lifter may use a long-handled fork (Fig. 66, 2) or shovel, pitching the turves for the barrowman to load. A barrow load is anything from ten to twenty peats. Apparently crude and artless, the turf barrow is well designed for its purpose, and it shows many adaptations to local conditions and traditions (Fig. 63). It is slatted for lightness and is made almost entirely of wood, yet it must be strong enough to take heavy loads over rough ground: it should be low and flat for convenience in loading and unloading, yet it needs a large broad wheel for pushing over an uneven surface. Legs may be dispensed with, reduced to lugs or swept back to serve as runners. Again the shape of the handles and the slope of the front board depend on the method of loading and tipping, over the side or over the front. Every detail of the design is in answer to a general or local problem. If the ground is very rough or soft the barrow must be pulled, not pushed, and in extreme cases its place is taken by a slipe. In Antrim alone there are several varieties of turf slipe. All are slatted lengthwise—because the peats are loaded transversely—and are fitted with short corner posts and tipping handles. An interesting variant—the roller slipe—has been recorded but is no longer seen: it had two rollers fitted under the body of the sledge.[1] The dried peats also may be transported, if the bog is soft, on a slipe (Fig. 58, 5) or in a carrying basket (Fig. 57).

Despite ingenious shifts towards greater speed the spreading and drying of turf are inefficient because of the time taken in wheeling and handling and the great difficulty of drying turf which is spread on almost saturated surfaces. In exceptionally wet summers the peats do not dry out, and tragedy may follow if the winter is severe. It is then that the countryside is stripped of what little timber it can provide, and before coal was obtainable anything from furniture to fishbones and cowdung was utilized to boil the pot. In bogless districts dung was quite regularly used: there are several accounts of it in travel records of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed in the treeless islands dung was until recently carefully harvested, gathered in piles in the fields in spring, and sometimes worked with the

[1] E. E. Evans in *Aspects of Archaeology* (Ed. W. F. Grimes), plate 2A.

 [Text continues on p. 194]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

hands into cakes and piled against a wall until dry enough to carry home.[1]

After lying spread on the ground for a week or two the turves are footed, that is a dozen or so are put to lean together in the shape of a pitched roof, to catch the wind (Fig. 64). This is work for women and for children, who are, in some districts, given a week's holiday from school. Through the months of June and July and often into August there is constant coming and going as the peats are turned and built into larger and larger piles, turn-foots, castles, rickles, lumps and clamps—the names and the shapes show considerable regional variation—until they can be ricked or stacked on the bog ready to be carried to the farms as opportunity offers. The wind is the main drying agent, and once dried the peats acquire a waterproof skin. A well-built stack will throw off the rain, but it is usual in the west to thatch with rushes and add a coping of sods or stones against the wind. Open-sided turfsheds specially built of wood or stone are the exception rather than the rule. A favourite place for the stack is against the house gable, where it provides a protective warmth even before the turf is burnt. The fuel is taken into the house in baskets, creels or wights, and a small supply is kept handy by the fireside or stored, as in the Aran Islands, on the kitchen loft (Pl. 9, 2).

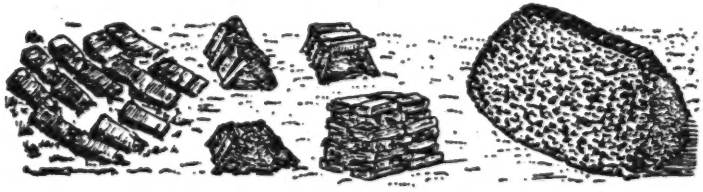

FIG. 64. Stages in the drying and stacking of turf (not to scale; the stack, right, is about 9 feet high).

Some lowland bogs are too waterlogged to be cut into turves, and if no slane-turf is available the black turf-mud is moulded by hand into bricks or balls which are stacked to dry. In some counties, for instance Meath and Cavan, mud turf is highly prized and its preparation follows a well-ordered routine. After

[1] C. R. Browne and A. C. Haddon, *The Aran Islands*.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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were poor and there were no wheeled vehicles, or where there was no horse for a slide-car, the burden rope was all that was required to carry home the harvest; distances were mercifully small on the tiny farms. Rushes for rope making were cut when fully grown, beetled with a mell and broken by hand to rid them of pith. They were then spread to dry and afterwards tied in bundles ready to be fashioned into ropes when wintry weather brought indoor leisure. Ropes made of cowhair as well as horsehair, sometimes mixed with seasoned sedge (sprit) once found many uses about the farm. Horsehair fishing lines and snares for seabirds are described elsewhere, but we may refer here to snares for small birds which in south Armagh, for example, are laid on the grass in hard wintry weather over a scattering of grain or breadcrumbs. Inside the frame of a pegged string or a bent sally rod are tied a dozen or more snares made of single or double horsehair. By this means blackbirds, thrushes, sparrows, and finches are caught by the feet, nowadays for sport but, no doubt, once as a welcome addition to the food supply. Similar horsehair snares for catching small birds are known from England and, further afield, from the Sudan. Reins of horsehair are said to have been common quite recently in Donegal, and I would hazard a guess that horsehair nets, such as were made in Harris (Martin Martin tells us) for catching seals, were formerly made there.

Mats and baskets of many kinds were fashioned from straw and other materials such as marram grass. This tough grass is harvested in places all around the coast and put to many uses, including thatching. It is cut below the surface of the sandy dunes, and in Donegal I have seen a toothed sickle used for the purpose. The techniques of constructing mats and baskets of these materials are closely related and seem to fall into three classes, sown plaits, built-up plaits and coiled work. Coiled basketry is best represented in the once universal bee-skep, in the seed-baskets of the south, the seats and armchairs of the west, and in the food-carrying baskets of the Aran Islands (Fig. 69). It is an interesting detail of their construction that a bone pin is used to insert the ties, which are usually made of split briar. The conical hens' nests hung on pegs on the kitchen walls (Fig. 16) are also constructed in a coil technique, but

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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figured in the economy of the farm or in medicinal and magical lore would be an almost endless task. One recalls that a group of Californian Indians practising a food-gathering economy is said to have made use of 176 species of wild plants for satisfying almost all their needs. A few examples of the survival of a collecting culture in Ireland may be given, taken from various sources such as Wood-Martin's pioneer work, but also from folk-memory. From the roots of ferns were extracted oils used in weaving, from those of the water lily, a cherished red dye, a substance for tanning from tormentil roots, and ink from the roots of flags (saggins). Bracken and wood ash were kept for making soap, and the ashes of thistles were the perquisite of the herdsmen. Large lake rushes provided materials for caulking boats and churns, and phragmites stems for winding yarn in the shuttle. Lady's bedstraw besides being rubbed on bee-skeps to attract a swarm, produced both dye and rennet. For cures we have the carrageen or Irish moss as well as the moss growing on crosses and other special stones, and a great number of flowers and herbs. Yarrow, in Irish, is called 'the herb of the seven cures'. But the sovereign remedy was the essence of all wild flowers contained in what was euphemistically known as 'all-flower water', i.e., cow's urine.[1] We shall return to these topics in Chapter XXI.

[1]W. G. Wood-Martin, *The Elder Faiths*, 2, 183.

Note. Mr. A. T. Lucas has recently published accounts of hurling balls made of cowhair (see *J.C.H. and A. Soc.*, 57, 99–104; 59, 78–81).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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confined to Co. Westmeath) is that the eel was undamaged and its skin could therefore be utilized. Apart from their use as thongs and flail-hangings eel-skins were worn as charms against rheumatic pains. Eel fat, too, is esteemed as a cure for rheumatism. The third type of eel-spear is quite different in form and methods of use. It is confined to Wexford Harbour and would appear to be a relic of Scandinavian influence in that half-foreign south-eastern corner of Ireland comprising the baronies of Bargy and Forth. It consists of two splayed prongs between which is ingeniously mounted a single barbed prong on to which the eel is guided by the outer members (Fig. 79). When the tide covers the mudflats the fisherman lies in a punt with his head over the prow, and with a spear in each hand propels the boat until he spies an eel in the mud, when his punting pole becomes a weapon. At low tide the eel fishers wear yard-long 'scooches' or mud-shoes, wooden boards turned up at the front like miniature skis. We note in passing that boards were formerly worn by both men and horses in working on soft bogs in Co. Mayo.[1]

The salmon spear or leister, being illegal, is normally a light three-pronged instrument, but large specimens weighing up to eight pounds and made after the fashion of the Westmeath eel-spears are found on the River Suir (Fig. 80). The fish were attracted at night by 'burning the river' with resinous splits of bog-fir or lumps of peat soaked in oil.

Riverine weirs of many kinds have been the privilege of religious houses and landed properties through the ages, and many examples specially designed for the capture of migratory fish, salmon and eels are maintained. There are traditions of temporary weirs of heather stems weighted down with stones, into which trout were driven to be extracted when the bundles of heather were pitched on to the bank. Gerard Boate describes the weirs in his day as consisting of 'big stones set close together from the one side of the river to the other, leaving only one hole . . . before which hole a basket being laid, they take therein a great quantity of fish'.[2] 'Fish baskets' and 'weels' are referred to in many ancient fishing grants, but I have not

[1] J. McParlan, *Mayo*, 94.
[2] Gerard Boate, *Ireland's Natural History*, 70.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

539
796 origin, and the church honors St. Martin of Tours in the liturgy of November
[178] 11th. O Suilleabhain suggests that the Catholic feast has been reinterpreted with
[182] a pagan festival, which had the sacrificial shedding of blood as one of its main
[252] facets. St. Martin also is associated with the grinding of corn and with miraculous
796 powers for causing growth in plants and creating animals from inanimate matter.
776 In Inis Beag, the saint is regarded as a miller who was martyred in Ireland during
798 the Middle Ages by being cast under a mill wheel and ground to death. A few
796 islanders still observe the taboos of not turning wheels or spinning on the vigil
776 and feast day to honor his martyrdom. The Sunday before St. Martin's Day is
782 called "bloody Sunday," when those who can afford to do so butcher a sheep to be
[231] consumed by the family on the feast day; others less fortunate kill a fowl or duck
[828] during the vigil. Using the sacrificed animal's blood, the father or mother makes
[231] the sign of the cross on the forehead of each member of the family, while praying that the saint guard the safety of all in the year to follow. Some folk use the blood to bless in a like manner the fireplace, bedposts, front door, and outbuildings; all crosses, including those on the forehead, are allowed to remain until obliterated by natural causes.

796 Just as the girls of Inis Beag carry the Brigid's Doll and beg from door to
825 door on the feast day of the saint, the boys do the same with a wren attached to
417 a long wooden pole on the morning of St. Stephen's Day, the feast day following
53 Christmas. The "wrenboys" travel in pairs and are invited into each home, where they are awarded coins for dancing and singing this song:

> Wren, wren, the king of the birds,
> St. Stephen's Day he was caught in the furze.
> So little I am, my family is great.
> Get up landlady and give us a break.
>
> Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
> And give us a shilling to carry the wren.
> If you haven't a shilling a ha'penny will do.
> If you haven't a ha'penny—God bless you.

Handkerchiefs, ribbons, and a sprig of holly also are attached to the pole, and in 1959 only one pair of youths managed to "hunt the wren" successfully and thus maintain the tradition. A home is not blessed by these visitations, as in the case of the groups of girls on St. Brigid's Day, but the act of giving money is believed
[184] to bring luck to the household. In some regions of the mainland, wrenboys wear straw masks, animal skins, or horns, and carry the wren on a holly bush or decorated wooden tray as they march in procession shouting and singing songs to the accompaniment of homemade skin tambourines (Evans 1957:279). Little is known of the pagan roots of the ceremony.

771 In addition to the reinterpretations associated with the holy well and with
776 Celtic festivals, there are many others of lesser significance of which only three will be considered here: beliefs concerning ghosts, the evil eye, and the afterworld.
771 We have seen that most of the folk have had contact of some sort with the fairies;
775 they also have witnessed ghosts—called "shades"—in corporeal form in Inis Beag or sailing the surrounding waters. These beings, who "aren't of this world," some-

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bathing his chest in the mother's absence. (In this case, Oedipal and sexual attitudes probably were at work in tandem.)

It must be pointed out that nudity is also shunned for "health" reasons, for another obtrusive Inis Beag character trait is hypochondria. In some cases, however, it is hard to determine whether concern with modesty or health is dominant in a particular behavioral response. Fear of colds and influenza is foremost among health concerns; rheumatism and related muscular joint ailments, migraine headaches and other psychosomatic disorders, tooth decay, indigestion ("nervous stomach"), and hypermetropia are other widespread pathologies which cause worry among the folk—not to mention those of supernatural origin.

Secrecy surrounds the acts of urination and defecation. The evacuation of infants before siblings and strangers is discouraged, and animals that discharge in the house are driven out. Chickens that habitually "dirty" their nests while setting are soon killed and eaten. Although some women drink spirits privately, they seldom do so at parties. In part this is because of the embarrassment involved in visiting the outside toilet with men in the "street" looking on. One of the most carefully guarded secrets of Inis Beag, unreported in the many works describing island culture, is the use of human manure mixed with sand as a fertilizer. We were on the island eight months before we discovered that compost is not "street drippings" and "scraw," but decomposed feces. With "turf" becoming more difficult to procure from the mainland, some islanders have taken to importing coal and processed peat and burning cattle dung. The dung is prepared for use in difficult-to-reach plots at the back of the island when tourists are few in number; it is burned covertly because of the overtones of sex and poverty. Another custom that my wife and I learned of late in our research, due to the secrecy surrounding it, concerns the thickening of wool; men are required to urinate in a container and tread the wool therein with their bare feet.

Other major manifestations of sexual repression in Inis Beag are the lack of a "dirty joke" tradition (at least as the term is understood by ethnologists and folklorists) and the style of dancing, which allows little bodily contact among participants. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendoes, puns, and asides—that they believed bore sexual connotations; relatively speaking, they were pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a verse refers to an island bachelor arising late in the day after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate"; this is